

Groove, Space, and Dynamics

Groove, Space, and Dynamics. Three things that we can always have more of in the music we create.

Today at 1:00 in the afternoon, I'm rehearsing for an upcoming worship event. Why in the middle of the day on a weekday? Well, it's being led by a guild of full time worship leaders in Ephrata. We make up most of the band. On the 19th of June at 6:00 PM a worship event called "LET THE GLORY OF YOUR NAME BE THE PASSION OF YOUR CHURCH" will kick off two weeks of churches serving the community in what's called the Ephrata Project.

Sure, you're invited to join us, but here's why I'm telling you this. Well, the band is made up mostly of full time worship leaders, and even though they make their livelihood doing this, it's still good to be reminded of the fundamentals of playing music together as we begin our rehearsals. This is what I'm going to share with them, and I thought I'd pass it along to you too. Enjoy!

Groove

- ~ A common pulse – we need to be feeling that underlying regularly recurring beat...maybe we're all bobbing our heads at the same time [but not like metal heads, no offense metal heads]
- ~ The correct tempo – there's a reason songs are written at a certain tempo...they work that way! [and yes, I will be using my metronome app]
- ~ Always listen and respond to each other – focus on interacting musically, call and respond, give each other room
- ~ Know what makes the song "work" – is it the kick drum pattern, a downstrum pattern on the guitar, a piano riff?
- ~ Ask "Are the parts fitting together? Do they 'lock' in place?"
- ~ Ask "Are we playing on the same 'side' of the beat?" – the more on the "backside" of the beat, the deeper the groove [within reason, of course]. If one of you pushes the beat and another one drags the beat [even if your both playing the identical tempo] it won't groove.

Space

- ~ Man, this is the final frontier...most bands never get there [okay, on to the positive]
- ~ The notes are as important as the space [or the "not notes"]
- ~ Ask "Where can I add space or lay out?"
- ~ Ask "Where am I not needed or crucial to the music?"
- ~ Ask "Where can I let someone else shine?"
- ~ Ask "Can I play fewer notes, beats, harmonies?"
- ~ Ask "Would my part sound full if I played it alone?" If so, then it's likely too much – play things that would sound too empty if played solo

Dynamics

- ~ Ask "Am I playing as 'small' as I can? Am I playing as 'big' as I can?"
- ~ Ask "Do I need to play the whole song?" "Does everyone need to start playing at the beginning of the song?" [think like a symphony]
- ~ Ask "What number is each section?" Assign a number [1-10] to each section, for example, Intro: 8, Verse One: 4, PreChorus: 5, Chorus One: 7...

Here are some ideas for how to play with different dynamics on each instrument:

Piano

One hand – two hands
Block chords – moving/arpeggiated rhythms
Play a higher register – play a lower register
Play a melodic riff/pattern only – play the chords
Lay out – play

Acoustic Guitar

Capo high – no capo/full chord
Pick – strum
Muted strum – full ringing strum
Finger pick – pick using a pick
Lay out – play

Electric Guitar

EBow – picked lead
Muted strum – full ring strum
Clean – distortion/other effects
Melodic lead – strum
Lay out – play

Bass

Play staccato – play legato
Play higher strings – play lower strings
Play whole note rhythms – play quarter, eighth, or sixteenth rhythms
Lay out – play

Drums

Hi-hat/kick pattern – hi-hat/snare/kick pattern
Closed hi-hat – open hi-hat or crash “hi-hat”
Straight groove/beat – lots of fills
Use lighter sticks/hot rods – heavier/wood sticks
Lay out – play

Aux instruments

If you play woodwind, strings, or brass...please don't play all the time! You're beautiful, really, but hearing a wondering clarinet though a whole set is just not helping the overall sound.

We hope you're encouraged by the Worship Fertilizer, a free resource from Ad Lib Music, *“in simple love and pure devotion to Jesus, we are eradicating isolation and burnout so that leaders bear much fruit!”*